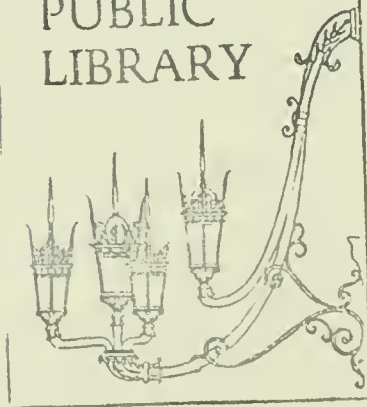


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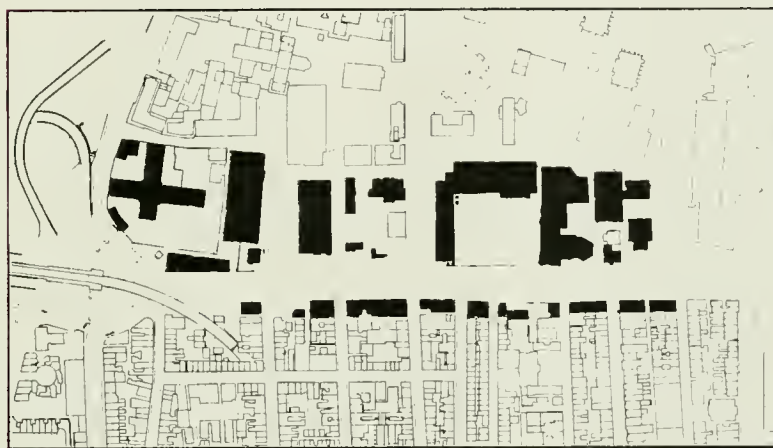
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# THE CAMBRIDGE S·T·R·E·E·T PLAN

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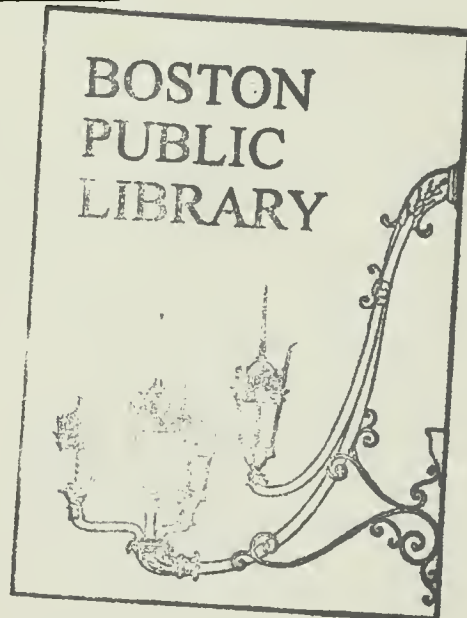
BOSTON  
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LIBRARY

CITY OF BOSTON  
Raymond L. Flynn, Mayor

## BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Stephen Coyle, Director  
Clarence J. Jones, Chairman  
Michael F. Donlan, Co-Vice Chairman  
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James K. Flaherty, Treasurer  
Consuelo Gonzales-Thornell, Member  
Kane Simonian, Secretary

August 1991







# **CAMBRIDGE STREET DISTRICT PLAN**

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Beacon Hill Architectural Commission





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## I. Executive Summary



## Executive Summary

Cambridge Street is in many ways the frontline of what has been the battle for Boston's identity and image in the 20th century. It demarcates the line between historic Beacon Hill and the modern towers of the West End. Remnants of a 19th-century past are nudged aside by the legacies of Urban Renewal and superhighway construction: a suburban-style shopping mall, institutional towers, the Charles River Park complex, and the Charles Circle traffic ramps.

Irregularly-shaped plazas, popularized during the '60s, spill out onto the box-like street grid. On the north side of the street, buildings inch forward and back from the street, leaving no clear definition of an edge for the pedestrian. Pedestrians using cross streets face daunting arterial traffic, while at Charles Circle, dangerous and disorienting traffic patterns force transit riders overhead to elevated passageways.

All of the debates about what a modern city ought to be -- shiny and new or inspired by history; tall, imposing and intimidating or scaled to the human form; an intricate grid of streets or expansive irregularly-shaped plazas; experienced from an automobile or on foot -- nowhere are these conflicts more visible than on Cambridge Street.

Unlike other streets of similar size, such as Boylston Street, Cambridge Street lacks a unified

image. The dichotomy of use and appearance along Cambridge Street inhibits the establishment of a single identity for the street. The result is a place that feels more like a boundary between areas than a public space that joins them together.

Cambridge Street, however, has many fine individual assets. Two National Register buildings, Old West Church and the Harrison Gray Otis House, crown the upper north side. There is a small, but well-used public library, and a fire station. Many successful retail shops line both sides of the street. Massachusetts General's 19th-century Physician's Residence now covers the front of an oversized concrete garage. The Charles Street Jail, a prominent Granite-style historic structure, leads to the Charles River Esplanade.

Cambridge Street requires those types of improvements which would lend it cohesiveness, such as consistent treatment of its sidewalks and a continuous street wall. But Cambridge Street as a series of blocks, each with its own distinctive use, form, and character, can also be improved to distinguish its individual assets.

These goals may seem contradictory. But for the 40 years since Urban Renewal, Cambridge Street has been a contradiction. Realizing this rather simple truth is the starting point for the Plan for Cambridge Street.



View of Cambridge Street looking east



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## II. FRAMEWORK FOR THE PLAN





## History of Cambridge Street and Environs

Cambridge Street divides the new West End from historic Beacon Hill abutting its north slope.

### The Fashionable West End

Originally the West End was a dense grid of streets and avenues. In the 18th century, fashionable Bostonians built grand mansions here. One that survived is the first of three houses that Charles Bulfinch built for Harrison Gray Otis in 1795. A decade later, the Old West Church was built adjacent to Otis' home, by Bulfinch protege Asher Benjamin. Both are National Register properties. The space in front of the Old West Church was

added later as part of a movement to create small urban squares in imitation of Boston Common.

### 19th-Century Institutional Growth

The West End's distant location and access to fresh sea breezes, were among the reasons for the location of the Massachusetts General Hospital there in 1819. The area's remoteness was also a factor in the decision to locate the Charles Street Jail there in the 1850's. In the latter half of the 19th century, West End development intensified with immigration. Much like the North End, small dwellings were replaced by three- and four-story brick tenements.



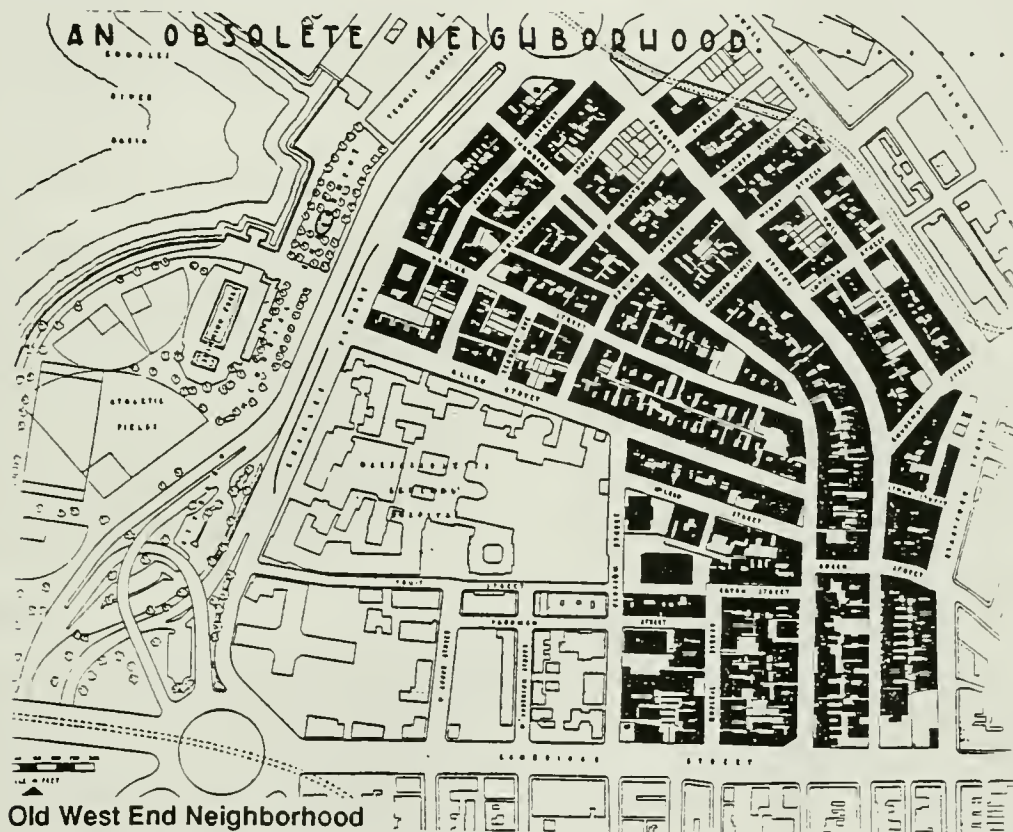
Harrison Gray Otis House (1795), shown here in 1919 photo



### Blighted and Decadent

In the 1950s, city planners determined that the West End area was blighted and inaugurated the now obsolete practice of slum clearance. With the use of federal funds, crowded streets and brick tenements were demolished and replaced by superblocks and apartment buildings. The now-infamous destruction of the physical and social fabric of the West End neighborhood is legendary.

The Charles River Park complex was designed in a campus-like manner with large playlots and parks, and with tall buildings set off by expansive lawns. Landscaped pedestrian walkways, unrelated to the block pattern of Cambridge Street, were created on the interior. The design of the complex favored an inward orientation isolated from urban surroundings. Buildings planned near Cambridge Street were set at irregular angles and set back from the street edge.



1950 City Planning Board, General Plan for Boston





### Beacon Hill's North Slope

On its other side, Cambridge Street abuts the north slope of Beacon Hill. Laid out and developed between 1795 and 1808 according to standards established by Charles Bulfinch, Beacon Hill is one of the finest examples of a large Early Republican or Federal Period urban area in the United States. The character of the north slope of the hill was differentiated by the end of the 18th century into three distinct areas: a section of stately Bulfinch-designed homes around Bowdoin Square, a red-light district along the river, and the first substantial black community in Boston. The north slope has hundreds of three- and four-story brick row houses dating from the Federal Period and from the period between 1830 to 1880.

### The Beacon Hill Historic District

Today, Beacon Hill is an historic district so designated by state law in 1955. The Beacon Hill Architectural Commission enforces design guidelines established for the area and reviews changes proposed to the architecture of buildings. In 1962, the Beacon Hill Historic District was also designated as a Registered National Historic Landmark. Beacon Hill contains many individual properties which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places including the Boston Athenaeum and the Massachusetts State House.

### Charles Circle

At the end of Cambridge Street is Charles Circle which connects to the Longfellow Bridge and the city of Cambridge. Its predecessor, the Cambridge Bridge, fed directly into Cambridge Street and was at a cross-axis with Charles Street. But with the growing emphasis on vehicular traffic, alterations were made in 1939 to facilitate traffic circulation and also to accommodate MBTA rail. The result was the roundabout, named the George Washington Circle, and now commonly referred to as Charles Circle. In 1951, Storrow Drive was widened and later elevated ramps constructed, further exacerbating the sense of separation between the city and the riverfront.





## General Context

Cambridge Street stretches for approximately one quarter of a mile from Longfellow Bridge at Charles Circle to Boston's civic heart, Government Center. Its southern side abuts Beacon Hill while on the opposite side are located institutions of national renown and the Charles River Park residential community.

### A Diversity of Land Uses

The District encompasses a broad diversity of land uses which include institutions such as Massachusetts General Hospital and the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, the residential areas of Beacon Hill and Charles River Park, and the predominantly retail and commercial Cambridge street itself. Two prominent open spaces can be found at either end of the street: the Esplanade and City Hall Plaza.

### The South Side

On the south or Beacon Hill side of the street, brick rowhouses create a dense but not continuous street wall. Underutilized structures of one or two stories as well as vacant parcels have left gaps. The majority of brick buildings are a mix of uses, typically commercial at street level and residential on upper floors. Among the type of uses are several restaurants, delicatessens and coffee shops, Suffolk University administrative buildings, a City fire station, hair salons, a hardware store, and a gas station.

### The North Side

The north side of the street is predominantly institutional and reflects the early modern planning and urban design approaches of the 1950's. The wide city blocks, high-rise concrete buildings and architectural vocabulary contrast with the historic buildings of Beacon Hill. Massachusetts General Hospital's main entrance is at North Grove Street. The north side also contains the Charles River Plaza shopping mall, which contains a number of retail stores, banks, a large grocery store, a movie theater, a Holiday Inn and surface and below-grade parking. Next to it are the West End Library and the historic Otis House and Old West Church.

### Massachusetts General Hospital

MGH has been a major actor in recent years regarding new development in the District. Most recently, a new bed tower was completed at the inner regions of the campus, while new office and retail space was built on Cambridge Street at North Grove, markedly improving the North Grove Street entry. The new development complements in character, design, and materials, the relocated Physician's Residence on the opposite corner. The street wall has been restored and the attractive brick and iron fencing help to orient the pedestrian, while also echoing similar treatment at the Otis House and Old West Church.

New development anticipated for the coming decade includes a second bed replacement facility and a clinical support facility. These sites are outside the boundary of this Plan and are regulated by a Planned Development Area (PDA) zoning designation.

Within the Cambridge Street District MGH's properties include the block located between Anderson and Blossom Streets. In addition, by agreement with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Charles Street Jail is transferred to MGH as of July 1, 1991.

### An Intricate Pattern

Prior to the urban renewal program in the 1950's, Cambridge Street was the spine of the Beacon Hill and West End communities which were both well-connected to Cambridge Street with an intricate street pattern of small blocks with many cross streets. The superblock development of the 1950's Urban Renewal program severed connections between the West End and Cambridge Street.

### An Imbalance in Scale

The difference between the scale of blocks and buildings on the north and south sides of the street is evident. In some instances one city block on the west side is equal to several city blocks on the Beacon Hill side. As a result, pedestrians coming from Beacon Hill find that cross streets end abruptly at Cambridge Street rather than continuing through to the West End. This problem is also



apparent in the scale and volume of individual buildings on opposite sides of the street. The contrast between both sides of Cambridge Street is a direct result of this scale imbalance.

### Visual Confusion

Charles Circle is confusing for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, and it lacks a clear image as a city entrance. Pedestrians are almost unaware of the Esplanade when walking through Charles Circle toward Cambridge Street. The elevated MBTA Red

Line rails bisect the Charles Circle urban fabric and blocks views of Cambridge Street.

From Longfellow Bridge, a maze of signs, arrows and pedestrian overpasses detracts from the experience of entering the capitol city. The elevated MBTA lines, confusing traffic ramps, and overpasses further diminish the image of a civic entrance to the city.



Charles Circle





# Land Use



- Retail/Commercial
- Residential
- Office
- Hotel
- Government
- Institutional
- Open Space
- Parking





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### III. THE PLAN FOR CAMBRIDGE STREET



## Rationale for the Planning Conclusions

The Cambridge Street Plan is guided by certain key premises from which the policy recommendations follow.

- Cambridge Street must be given a cohesive identity based on its historical background and its role as an entrance to the City of Boston.
- Cambridge Street must become a boulevard, a grand promenade for pedestrians as well as a major traffic connector to downtown.
- Charles Circle must be identified as the gateway into the city limits.
- Cambridge Street must have a consistent program of capital improvements to reinforce its linear form and unify the two sides of the street.
- Cambridge Street should have a balanced mixed-use economy, of commercial, residential, and institutional development with new retail stores that respond to the needs of the local neighborhood for goods and services.
- Through-block pedestrian routes from the West End to Cambridge Street must be introduced to recapture such patterns lost to Urban Renewal.



## Policy Recommendations

The following are recommended policies for the revitalization of Cambridge Street.

### Development Strategy

As a whole, the District should have a program of preservation coupled with modest growth where new development would create aesthetic, economic, or cultural improvement.

The development strategy for Cambridge Street is to:

- Develop a balanced, mixed use economy of both commercial and residential space with retail space at grade and residential, office or laboratory space above.
- Site active uses on the ground floor fronting Cambridge Street at grade, such as retail stores, restaurants, and coffee shops, to create sidewalk activity.
- Develop locally-oriented, retail activity to serve the needs of the community such as grocery stores, convenience stores, and pharmacies.
- Promote sidewalk businesses such as cafes with outdoor seating, produce stands, and flower shops along the sunlit north side where sidewalk width is adequate.
- Develop Charles River Plaza as a major focal point and gathering space.
- Ensure that new development minimizes the conflict between pedestrian flow on the sidewalk and cars using side streets and accessing buildings or services such as gas stations.
- Develop uses at the edges of Charles Circle which will encourage activity, such as restaurants or the point of origin for a tourist walk along the Black Heritage Trail through historic Beacon Hill.



Massachusetts General Hospital development (1990) at North Grove Street





## Building Heights





## Urban Design Objectives

Cambridge Street has many fine elements: landmark buildings, a homogeneous pattern of streets and structures on some blocks, street trees, and in some areas, brick sidewalks. These assets are a point of departure for the urban design program recommended for Cambridge Street. While building design should acknowledge the differences in use, date, and lot size between the north and south sides of Cambridge Street, the need for a stronger relationship of scale and pattern between the sides should be respected.

The objectives of the Cambridge Street District Plan with respect to urban design are:

- Design new buildings sensitive to the scale and character of Beacon Hill without creating an architecture of literal imitation or false historicism.
- Orient the entrances of new buildings toward Cambridge Street so that pedestrian activity is focused on the street and not siphoned off to inner courtyards.
- Reinforce streetwall continuity and definition by limiting the extent of recesses and projections on building facades.
- Create a more formal entry to the city around Charles Circle.
- Set back and screen all mechanical equipment located on the roof top of new development projects on Cambridge Street, or conceal such equipment within a shallow hip- or gable-shaped roof using traditional materials and details such as slate shingles and copper gutters.
- Complete the typical Beacon Hill block pattern on the south side, replacing buildings which do not contribute to the character of the street and filling in vacant sites.
- On the north side, reinforce the image of a series of contained spaces having strong streetwalls with gateways on Cambridge Street opening into buildings or interior open spaces.
- Reflect the block and street pattern found on the Beacon Hill side of Cambridge Street on its opposite side. The massing of new buildings should provide for more frequent breaks in the street wall, while new pedestrian ways and streets should reflect the number and location of streets on the south side.



Suffolk University (1990)





- Encourage through-block public lobbies and atriums particularly where they restore historic connections between Cambridge Street and the West End.
- Redesign Charles River Plaza with building additions at the street edge with shops and cafes to redirect its pedestrian activity to Cambridge Street.

## Historic Preservation

Historic buildings of great significance crown the north side of the street: the First Harrison Gray Otis House built in 1795, Asher Benjamin's Old West Church, the Resident Physician's House, recently relocated to Cambridge Street by MGH, and the Charles Street Jail designed by Gridley Fox Bryant in 1851.

The Beacon Hill Historic District boundary runs parallel to Cambridge Street 40 feet in from the south side of the street.

Built in 1806 as a Congregational Meeting House, Old West Church is an early and successful example of a monumentally scaled church constructed in the Federal-Adamsesque style and is considered to be one of Benjamin's finest designs.

The First Harrison Gray Otis House designed by Charles Bulfinch and erected in 1795, served as the prototype for a series of five-bay, three-story brick Adamsesque style mansions that were built throughout New England during the Federal period. It is currently used as headquarters for the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

The Resident Physician's House (1891) is a freestanding Colonial Revival brick building, built as a private residence for the director of the Massachusetts General Hospital. The building was relocated to Cambridge Street in 1980 from Blossom Street and now contains offices and clinical space.

Massachusetts General Hospital's Ether Dome, also designed by Bulfinch and built in 1846 can be seen from Anderson Street.

Gridley Fox Bryant's Charles Street Jail (1851) has major architectural significance as the prime institutional example of the Boston Granite style of



Charles Street Jail (1851)

the mid-19th century. Its design reflects an enlightened and progressive attitude toward the humanitarian treatment of prisoners with individual cells for sleeping, and communal rooms for work and exercise.

The jail's design was based on the premise that individual cells should be for sleeping only, with additional room provided for communal work and exercise. The established practice of the time was to house inmates in individual cells opening into individual exercise yards, based on a Quaker ideal of solitude inducing contrition.

The commission to design the jail went to Bryant (1816-1899), whose career in architecture spanned most of the second half of the 19th century. Trained in the office of Alexander Parris, architect of the Quincy Market buildings, Bryant had one of the most successful practices in Boston of his time. He was known throughout New England for designing state capitols, city halls, hospitals, jails, courthouses, and other public buildings. In Boston, he also designed warehouses, wharf buildings and storeblocks.

As of July 1, 1991, the Charles Street Jail is transferred from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to the Massachusetts General Hospital which anticipates its redevelopment.





The Otis House, Old West Church, the Bulfinch Ether Dome, and the Charles Street Jail are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The objectives of the Plan with respect to historic preservation are to:

- Maintain all zoning, guidelines, and review processes intact for the Beacon Hill Historic District.
- Protect historic structures and showcase them with attractive improvements to the public realm such as consistent paving, lighting, fencing and signage treatment.
- Renovate, rather than replace, to the extent possible buildings which contribute to the architectural character of the District.
- Reveal the front yard and south and west facades of the Charles Street Jail by removing portions of the high wall. Its prominent location as a point of entry to downtown by foot, bicycle, car, or public transit should be emphasized.



Old West Church (1806)



## The Public Realm

Cambridge Street begins with a major open space, the Charles River Esplanade. Along the street, there are small parks, like the one on the corner of Anderson Street, and green lawns, such as at Old West Church. However, the north and south sides of the streets are dissimilar as evidenced by their differing sidewalk widths and even different styles of streetlights.

The street has great potential to become a lovely pedestrian promenade with plantings, historic lampposts, brick paving and bright banners and signs. Sidewalk activities should be encouraged in the much same manner that Washington Street has pushcarts.

The public realm objectives for Cambridge Street are to:

- Create a boulevard character with a continuous and dense line of flowering trees and characteristic streetlights to create a softer transition between the street and its edges, enhance views, and strengthen the linear perspective of the street.
- Use uniform streetscape elements on the two sides of the street to lend scale, texture, and interest and create uniformity and continuity such as street, trees, brick sidewalks, and acorn style street lamps.
- Increase pedestrian space by either widening sidewalks or widening and enhancing the street's median. The median strip could be improved with a treatment similar to Congress Street by adding flowering plants and low bushes for color and visual continuity, and brick and wrought iron fencing where useful to reinforce the linear perspective of the street with appropriate breaks for pedestrian crossings.
- Incorporate sculpture, banners, and awnings to create visual interest along sidewalks and open spaces.
- Improve open space along the street in a hierarchical fashion in the following manner:

(1) The sidewalks in front of ordinary buildings should be upgraded with consistent materials,

such as brick, acorn lamps, and wood and cast-iron benches.

(2) The existing pattern of denoting landmarks with front lawns and wrought-iron fences on masonry bases should be extended to the jail site and to the parcels between Cambridge Street and the dome of the Bulfinch Pavilion along North Anderson Street.

(3) The grand open spaces of the Charles River and Esplanade at the west end of the street and City Hall Plaza at the east end should be reinforced by the treatment of spaces leading up to them.

- Establish a welcoming entrance to the city at Charles Circle that manifests its special role as a gateway to Boston, and create a more legible and continuous enclosure for its urban space through new landscaping and building additions.
- Eventually replace the surface parking lots owned by the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary on the Esplanade with parkland as part of a comprehensive transportation plan for the institutions.












View from Cambridge Street toward Government Center and Custom House Tower

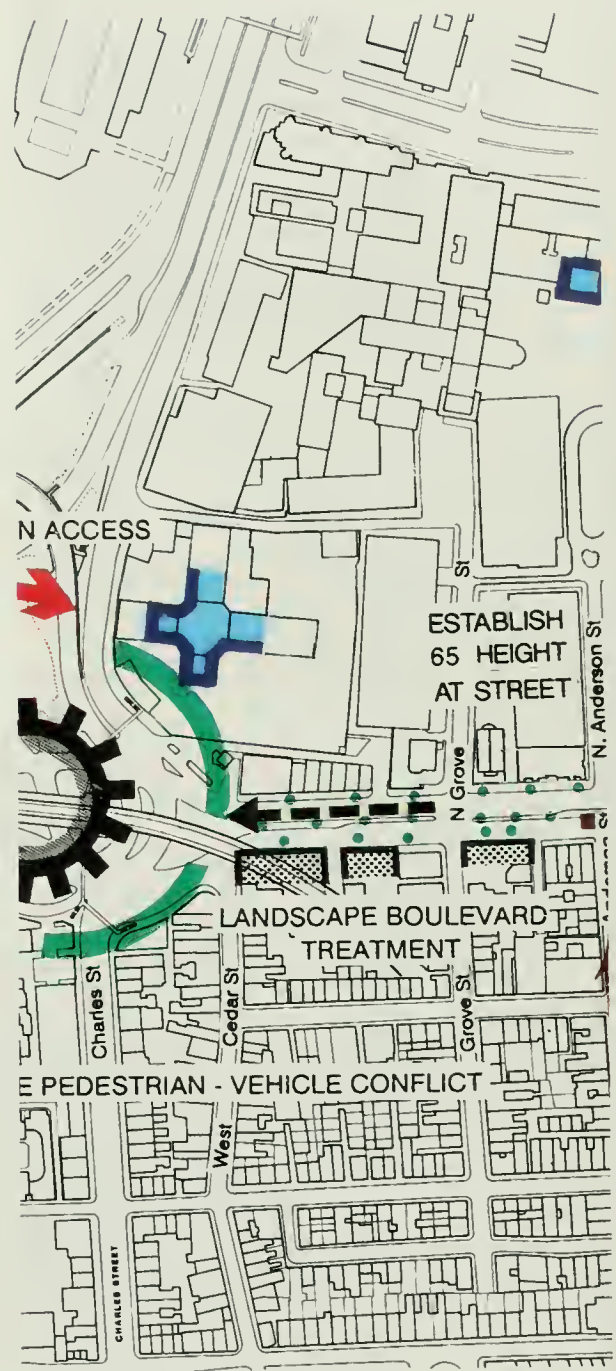


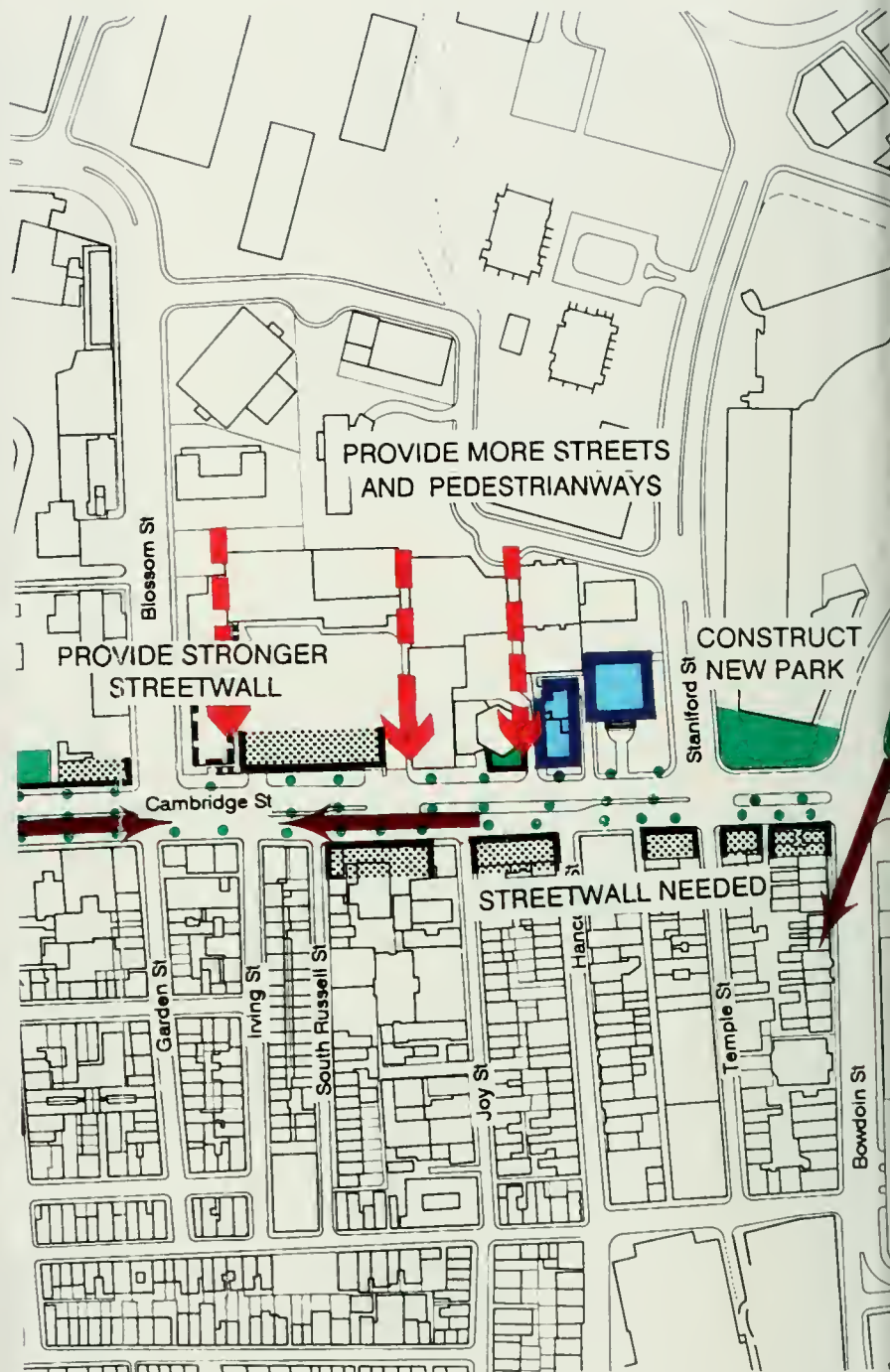


Urban Design Opportunities

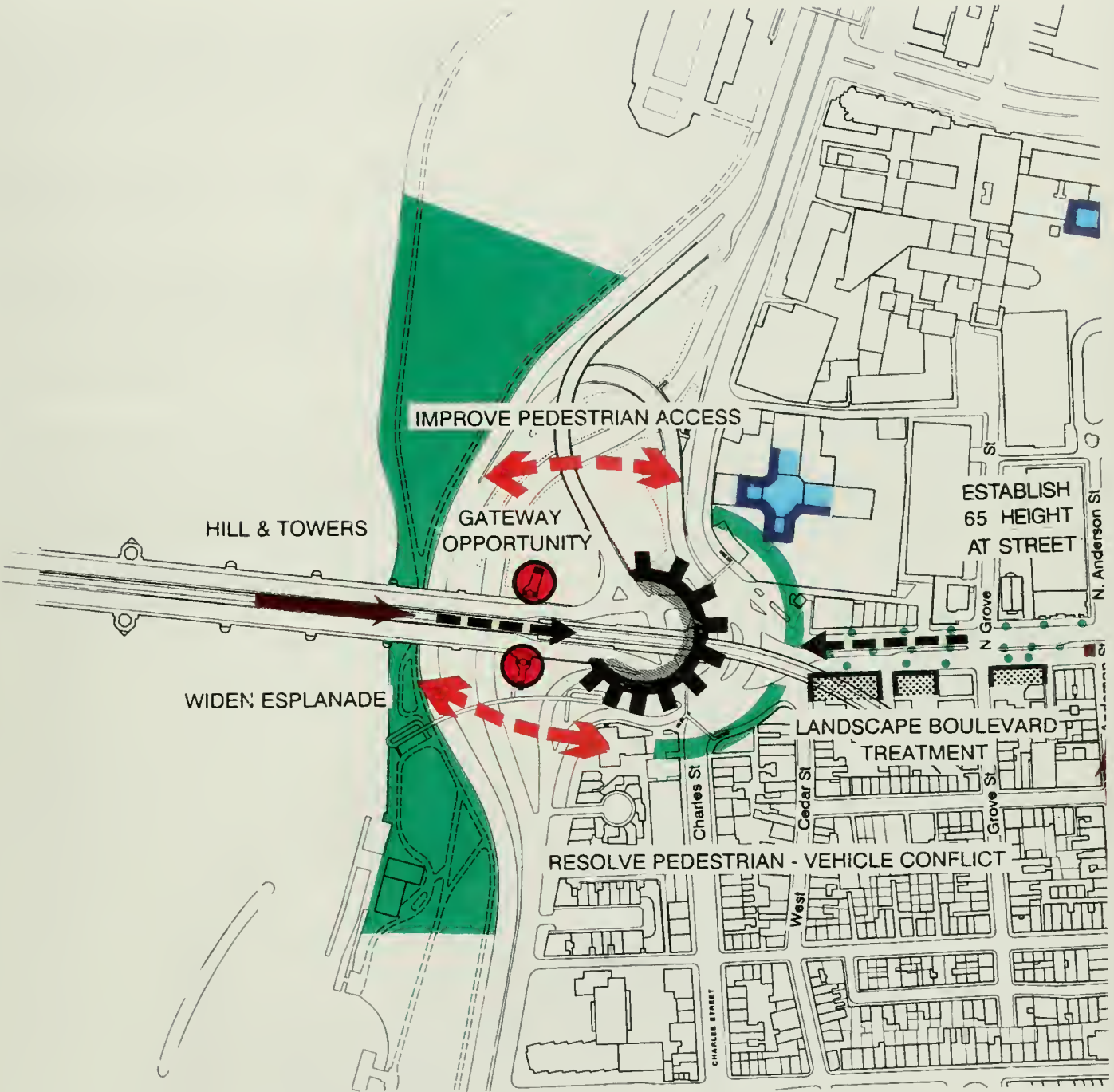


-  Street Wall
-  Open Space
-  Historic Buildings
-  Pedestrian Barrier
-  Gateway
-  Streetscape
-  Pedestrian Connection
-  Views
-  Clutter











## Views

Views of some of Boston's most valued modern and historic buildings exist along Cambridge Street, but navigating through the visual confusion and dangerous traffic patterns which exist there usually keep the passerby from appreciating them.

New development, building additions, and street improvements should be designed to retain and enhance the views.

All along Cambridge Street on the right there is the ruddy-colored brick backdrop of Beacon Hill, while on the left, the Bulfinch Pavilion Ether Dome (1846) can be seen down North Anderson Street. A perspective of the JFK Building terminates the linear view of the street.

Approaching Bowdoin Square, the street increases in elevation and curves toward Government Center. On the left, the perspective begins to shift from the vertical JFK Building to the horizontal City Hall and its wide plaza.

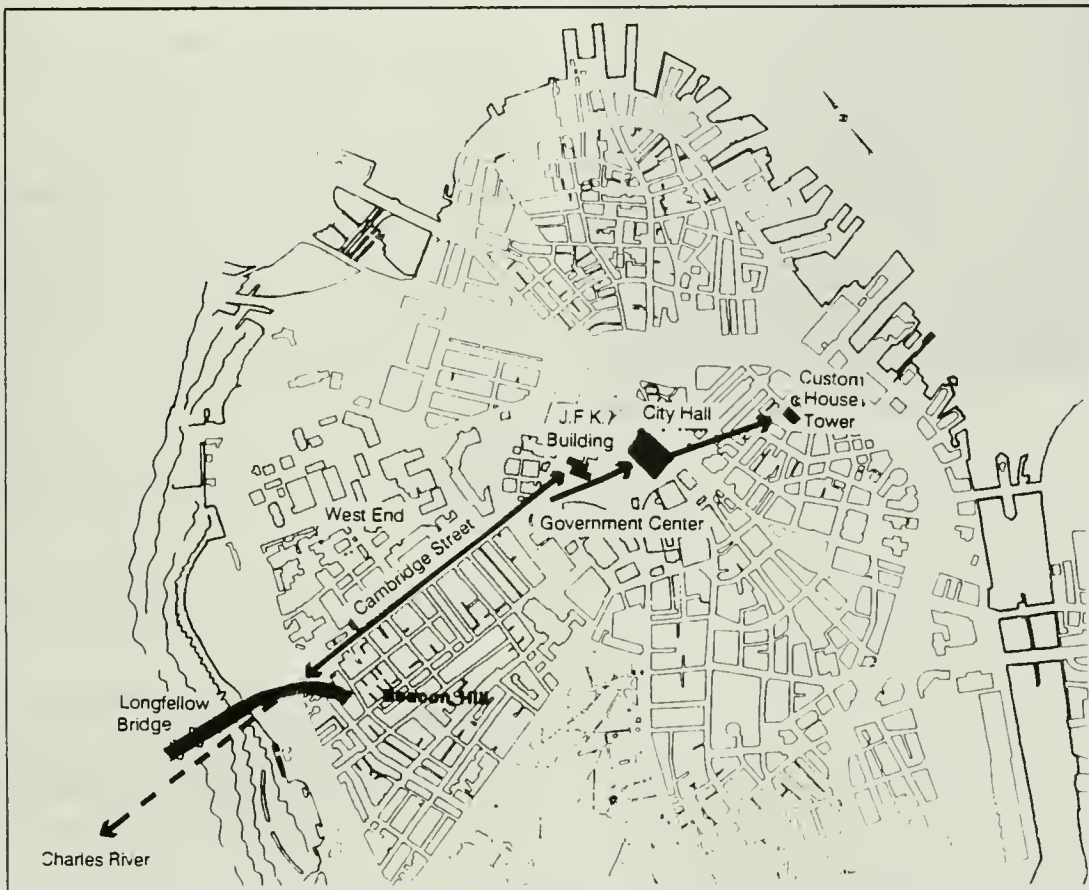
At that point, a generous view of the Custom House Tower appears. The Tower not only terminates the

sequence of perspective views, but also provides a memorable juxtaposition between modern and historic landmarks.

In the other direction there are views of Old North and Old West Churches from City Hall Plaza and a glimpse of the State House Dome from Bowdoin Square. The M.I.T. Earth Science Tower terminates the view from the upper part of the street, but the cluster of elements at Charles Circle dominates the view from Blossom Street and the blocks further west. The experience of leaving the City via Cambridge Street is far less memorable making a visible gateway at Charles Circle all the more significant.

The objective of the Cambridge Street Plan with respect to views is to:

- Orient new development and design streetscape improvements to enhance views of open spaces, the skyline, and important buildings such as Old West Church, the Ether Dome, the Charles Street Jail, Boston City Hall, the Custom House Tower, and the State House Dome.







## Transportation Access

The two ends of Cambridge Street are well served by public transit with a Red Line stop at Charles Street and a Blue Line stop at Bowdoin Square. The nearby Orange and Green Line stops at North Station and Haymarket also serve commuters and residents of the District.

The transportation network of the District is characterized by major arterials passing through and around it. Storrow Drive and Cambridge Street provide the major routes for automobiles traveling to and from the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and Government Center areas. The Charles River Park and Massachusetts General Hospital campus-like areas provide little through access, providing almost no relief for traffic on the arterials.

At Charles Circle competing automobile, pedestrian and public transit traffic make it one of Boston's most congested and noisy intersections. Dangerous pedestrian/vehicular conflicts occur along Cambridge Street, particularly where it intersects with North Grove, Blossom, and Staniford Streets.

A number of improvements need to be made to the pedestrian environment of Charles Circle. However, such improvements can only be made if major infrastructure changes were to occur. These changes require study to determine their technical feasibility and associated cost. These changes would include making the MBTA Charles Street Red Line Station handicapped accessible, and depression of a portion of Storrow Drive and its elevated ramps. Were such changes to occur in the future, vast improvements could be made to reduce noise, clear visual obstructions, and improve pedestrian connections between Cambridge Street and Beacon Hill, MGH, public transit, and the Esplanade. However, at this time, the feasibility of such alterations to the roadway and transit networks is uncertain.

The current transportation objectives of the Cambridge Street plan are to:

- Establish pedestrian priority at street crossings where left turning traffic often conflicts with pedestrian movement with appropriate signalization and by closing, where possible, some of the center island openings.

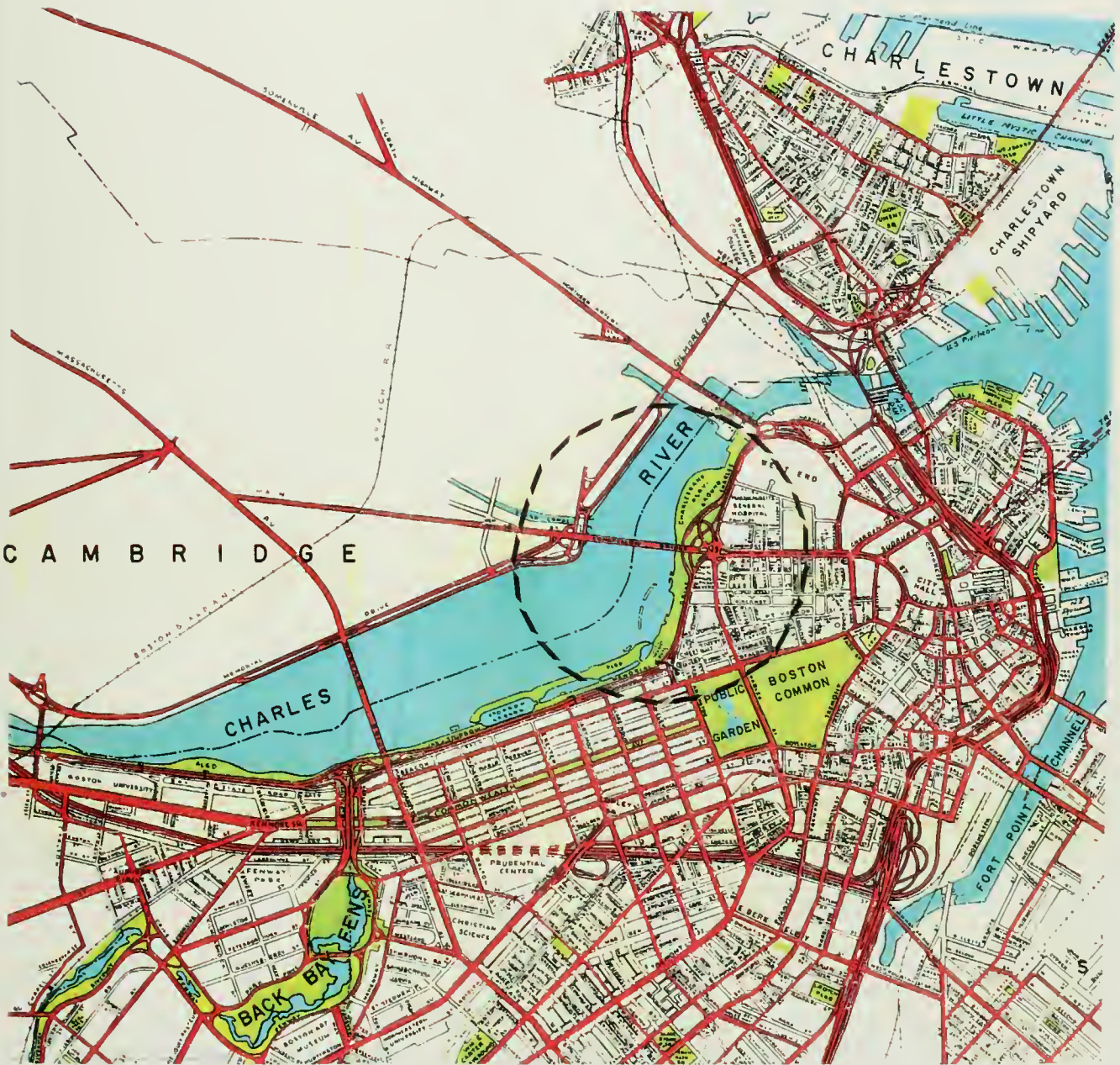
- Relocate service entrances on the north side off of Cambridge Street.
- Investigate the possible relocation of the entrance/exit openings of the Charles River Plaza Garage and surface parking in association with any new development proposal for that site.



Traffic on Cambridge Street







Major downtown thoroughfares showing Cambridge Street as primary link between downtown Boston and the City of Cambridge.



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## IV. South Side Urban Design Study





# Urban Design Study for the South Side of Cambridge Street

## Background

On January 16, 1991, the BRA held a public hearing to consider the Cambridge Street Plan and Zoning. With respect to the north side of Cambridge Street, there was general agreement on the recommendations made regarding height and FAR for the south or Beacon Hill side of the street. However, property owners and merchants from this area expressed concern that the recommendations of a height of 50 feet and FAR 3 were too low to encourage the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties. In addition, the owners and merchants expressed concern over the expansion of the Historic District as this would, in their opinion, require that proposed projects be submitted to the Beacon Hill Architectural Commission for a review more rigorous than warranted by the lesser significance of the Cambridge Street buildings.

The BRA Board voted to take the matter under advisement, and instructed the staff to resolve certain issues raised during the hearing, specifically, (1) the height and FAR for the south side of the street, and (2) the recommendation for expansion of the Beacon Hill Historic District to include this area.

## South Side Urban Design Study Methodology

In order to formulate appropriate dimensional requirements for Cambridge Street, an extensive urban design analysis was conducted of the south side of the street. The existing character of the street was carefully documented: the height, FAR, and site area of each building is known. A strategy successfully used in the study and zoning of Boylston Street was employed that involved establishing appropriate height and FAR on a block by block basis. The determination of appropriate dimensional controls was based on several factors including the height and massing of adjacent structures, the dimensions of buildings located immediately behind Cambridge Street on the streets perpendicular to it, and any other special circumstance such as the existence of an important community open space or the presence of a significant or historic building.

## Height

The study suggested that height regulations, instead of being uniform from one end of the street to the other, should vary along the street according to the unique circumstances of each block. Parcels already built out to four or more stories are zoned at their existing heights and FARs. However, for parcels considered underutilized and thus likely to be developed, a height of 55 feet appears to be an appropriate maximum height in order to make new construction feasible on these vacant or underutilized sites without adversely affecting adjacent properties along Cambridge Street or the character of the adjacent Beacon Hill neighborhood. In most cases, the heights of the properties immediately behind those on Cambridge Street on the perpendicular streets range from 30 to 45 feet. The grade of the perpendicular streets inclines, however, to give these properties a higher elevation than those directly on Cambridge Street. In addition, the width of Cambridge Street, in marked contrast to the narrow width of the perpendicular streets, argues for slightly greater height in the streetwall of Cambridge Street.

## Floor Area Ratios

The urban design study suggests that in order to encourage infill development that will create a strong street edge of compatible, but moderate growth, the predominant density of new structures should be, for the most part, between FAR 4 and 5. For the new or developable parcels, therefore, the FAR is 4 if the use anticipated is a commercial use. This would allow for one floor of ground-level retail or service use and three floors of commercial use. If the anticipated use is residential, an FAR of 5 will be allowed. Because the floor-to-floor height in residential development is less than in commercial development, a total of five floors could be provided. In either case, the total zoning height would not be allowed to exceed 55 feet.

Any project which exceeded the dimensions as described above would require zoning relief from the Zoning Board of Appeal.





### Block by Block Analysis

The following is an inventory of all of the blocks along Cambridge Street, the recommended height and FAR for each, and the considerations which informed those decisions. The blocks are lettered and correspond with the diagram which follows this text:

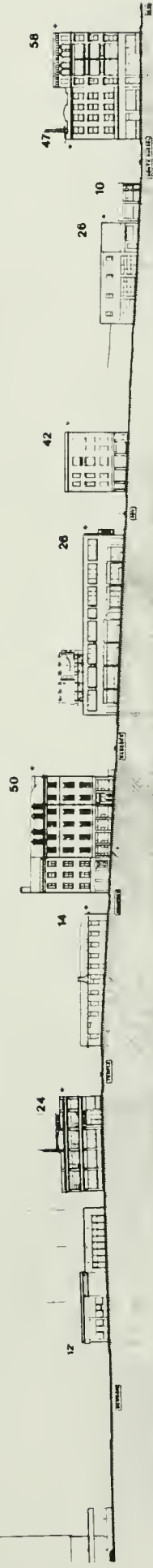
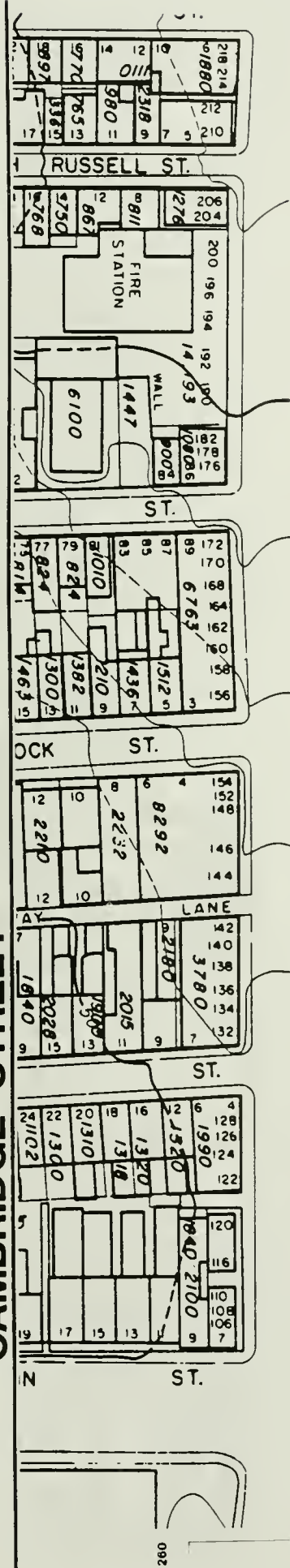
Block	Height	FAR	Considerations
A (Bowdoin-Temple):	55'	4/5	Proximity to Government Center Consistent with 50' Suffolk Building
B(Temple-Ridgeway):	55'	4/5	Proximity to Government Center Consistent with 50' Suffolk Building
C (Ridgeway-Hancock):	50'	5	Dimensions of existing building
D (Hancock-Joy)	55'	4/5	Consistent with Suffolk Building and with dimensions recommended for previous blocks
E (Joy-Fire Station)	45'	4	Dimensions of existing building
F (Fire Station site)	55'	3/4	Lower FAR reflects certain open space setbacks to respect an existing playground and daycare center behind the Fire Station as well as the rear elevations of the residential structures on South Russell St. An urban design study has been done illustrating three possible development scenarios of either a commercial or residential use each of which designate different parts of the site as open space.
G (South Russell-Irving)	55'	4/5	The two existing buildings on the site are 47' and 55'. Recommended dimensions reflect existing conditions with an allowance for the 47' building to go up to the prevailing height of its neighbor or 55'.
H (Irving-Garden)	40'	3	Dimensions of existing (38') rounded up to nearest 10-foot increment. This row of handsome townhouses is unique to the street and thus no additional building envelope is recommended.
I (Church site)	35'	3.5	Dimensions reflect an existing condition of an architecturally significant building with a gabled roof which contributes to the streetscape. Thus no additional building envelope is recommended.



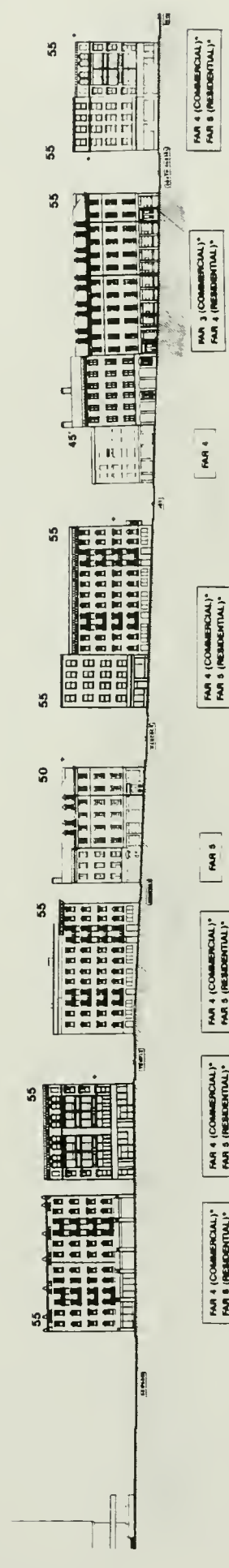
J. (Apt. Buildings)	55'	4/5	The existing building is 70'/FAR 7 which would be in non-conformance with the recommended zoning. Should the project be rebuilt, a building envelope more in keeping with the predominant recommended dimensions of 55' and FAR 4/5 is recommended. (In certain instances, a fire or other accident for example, the Code allows a building to be rebuilt to its pre-existing dimensions.)
K. (N. Anderson-Strong)	55'	5	Proposed dimensions reflect those of existing building
L. (Strong Place)	35'	3	Lower height and FAR respects the character of the early 19th-century worker rowhouses which exists behind the site on Strong Place.
M. (North Grove)	40'	4	Recommended dimensions create an appropriate transition between the adjacent building at 35' and the next block which retains the predominant dimensions of 55' and FAR 4/5.
N. (North Grove-Lindall)	55'	4/5	<p>A strong streetwall at the predominant height of 55' is needed as the street comes toward its end, particularly given the unsightly gap created by the elevated rail and the unused land beneath it. This height would create a sense of continuity as the street curves into Charles Circle where the new Tom's Store-also at 55'- is located.</p> <p>In addition, the Zoning Board of Appeal had previously granted zoning relief for a building at 326 Cambridge St. which makes up approximately one-half of this block to the west. The relief allowed for a building with a height of 55' and FAR 5.5 (the additional one half point in FAR reflected below-grade retail). The project was not constructed.</p>
O. (Lindall-West Cedar)	55' and open space	4/5	A portion of this parcel is located beneath the MBTA elevated rail. The proposed recommendation is to designate this area as open space. The portion bound by Cambridge Street and Lindall Place will be zoned at dimensions similar to blocks on either side.



# CAMBRIDGE STREET



EXISTING CONDITIONS



PROPOSED ZONING

A B C D E F G





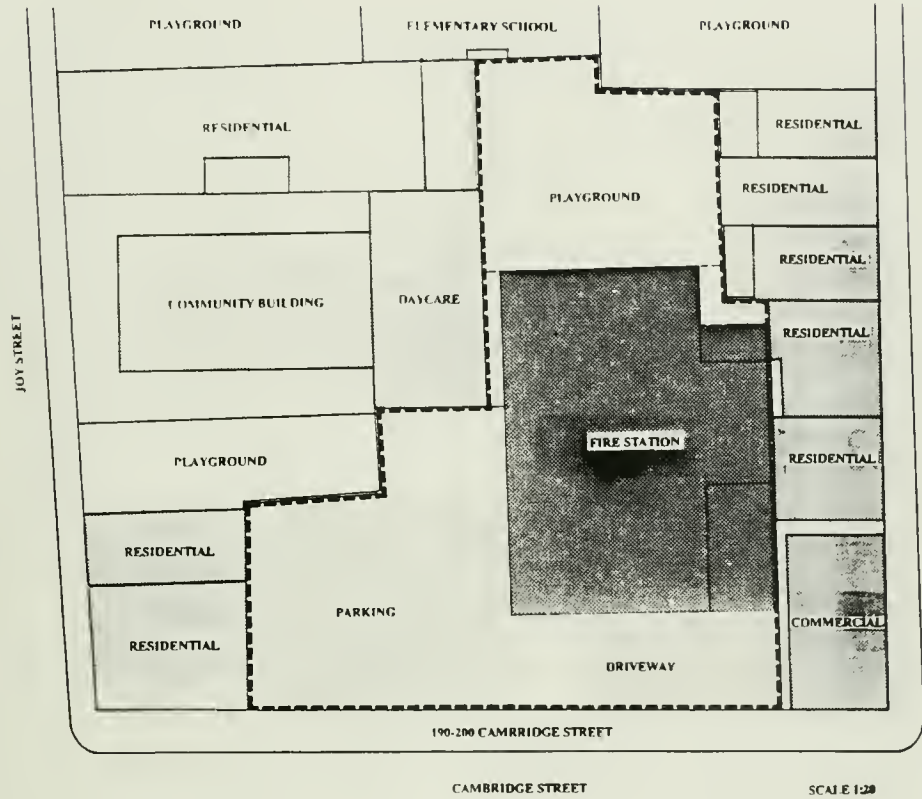
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STEFANO DIAMANTI, A.S.

# H I J K L M N O



Fire Station Site Urban Design Study

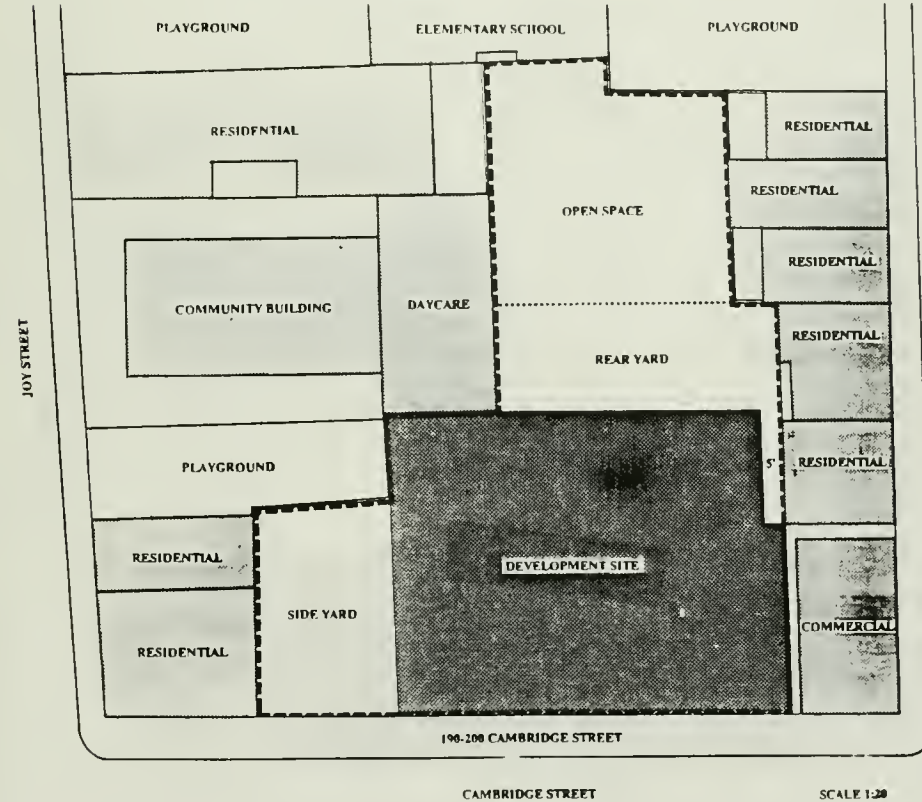


EXISTING CONDITIONS

FIREHOUSE USE AREA	10,793 S.F.
PLAYGROUND USE AREA	3,400 S.F.
TOTAL SITE AREA	14,193 S.F.
EXISTING BUILDING FOOTPRINT	5,720 S.F.
EXISTING BUILDING AREA (2 Floors)	10,825 S.F.
TOTAL SITE AREA EXISTING P.A.E.	0.76
FIREHOUSE USE AREA EXISTING P.A.E. (10,793 s.f. site)	1.00

CAMBRIDGE STREET ZONING

PARCEL LAND USE STUDY



SKETCH STUDY A

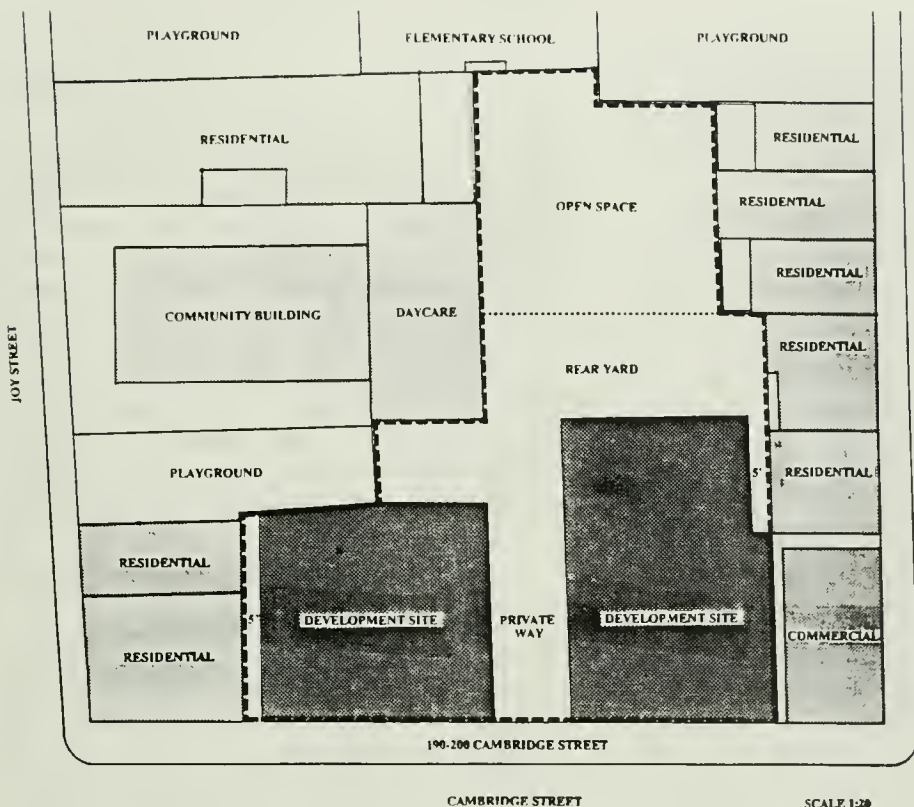
DEVELOPMENT SITE AREA (Former Firehouse Area)	10,293 S.F.
OPEN SPACE AREA (Former Playground Area)	3,900 S.F.
TOTAL SITE AREA	14,193 S.F.
BUILDING FOOTPRINT	7,550 S.F.
COMMERCIAL USE BUILDING (4 FLOORS)	
TOTAL BUILDING AREA	30,200 S.F.
TOTAL SITE P.A.E.	2.13
DEVELOPMENT SITE P.A.E.	2.93
RESIDENTIAL USE BUILDING (5 FLOORS)	
TOTAL BUILDING AREA	37,750 S.F.
TOTAL SITE P.A.E.	2.65
DEVELOPMENT SITE P.A.E.	3.47

CAMBRIDGE STREET ZONING

PARCEL LAND USE STUDY





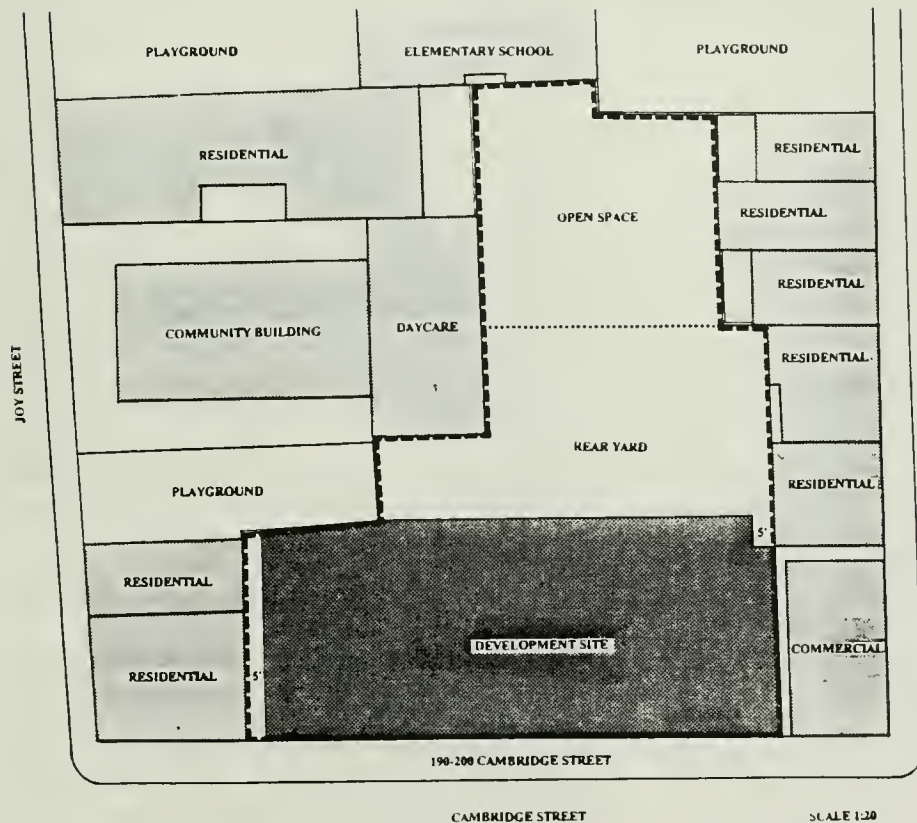


### SKETCH STUDY C

DEVELOPMENT SITE AREA	10,293 S.F.
(Former Firehouse Area)	
OPEN SPACE AREA	3,900 S.F.
(Former Playground Area)	
TOTAL SITE AREA	14,193 S.F.
BUILDING FOOTPRINT	7,750 S.F.
COMMERCIAL USE BUILDING (4 FLOORS)	
TOTAL BUILDING AREA	31,000 S.F.
TOTAL SITE P.A.R.	2.18
DEVELOPMENT SITE P.A.R.	3.01
RESIDENTIAL USE BUILDING (5 FLOORS)	
TOTAL BUILDING AREA	18,750 S.F.
TOTAL SITE P.A.R.	2.73
DEVELOPMENT SITE P.A.R.	3.74

### CAMBRIDGE STREET ZONING

PARCEL LAND USE STUDY



### SKETCH STUDY B

DEVELOPMENT SITE AREA	10,293 S.F.
(Former Firehouse Area)	
OPEN SPACE AREA	3,900 S.F.
(Former Playground Area)	
TOTAL SITE AREA	14,193 S.F.
BUILDING FOOTPRINT	7,350 S.F.
COMMERCIAL USE BUILDING (4 FLOORS)	
TOTAL BUILDING AREA	29,400 S.F.
TOTAL SITE P.A.R.	2.07
DEVELOPMENT SITE P.A.R.	2.85
RESIDENTIAL USE BUILDING (5 FLOORS)	
TOTAL BUILDING AREA	30,750 S.F.
TOTAL SITE P.A.R.	2.58
DEVELOPMENT SITE P.A.R.	3.57

### CAMBRIDGE STREET ZONING

PARCEL LAND USE STUDY



### Design Guidelines

Comprehensive design guidelines have been drafted for incorporation into the proposed zoning to guide future development around such issues as: street walls, windows, storefront details, entrances, rooftop mechanicals, streetscape, views, block pattern, light wells, solid to void ratio, facade organization, cornices, building base and belt courses, storefront rhythms, signage, and building materials. The BRA must certify to the Inspectional Services Department that a proposed project is consistent with the design guidelines until such time as the southern side of Cambridge Street is designated as an architectural district.

### Architectural district designation

A significant amount of discussion has taken place around the issue of whether and under what method Cambridge Street might be designated as an architectural or historic district. The primary purpose of such a designation would be to establish a public forum for the active discussion of the design guidelines for proposed development through the establishment of a commission. It is anticipated that such a commission would take over from the BRA the task of certifying that a proposed project comports with the design guidelines.

At the January 16 public hearing, the staff presented a recommendation that the BRA support the expansion of the Beacon Hill Historic District, thus requiring action by the state legislature. Study on this issue is ongoing. It appears that most of the buildings on Cambridge Street may not meet the stringent criteria established in the legislation for the Beacon Hill District and thus may not be eligible for inclusion in the District. Other designations such as a protection district or an architectural conservation district are being explored. The staff will continue to work with the Boston Landmarks Commission to find an appropriate means of accomplishing this objective.

### Community review of current proposals

To date, representatives of the Cambridge Street Allied Merchants Association are in general agreement with both this approach and with the substantive conclusions made regarding permanent zoning dimensions. The Merchants are opposed to the extension of the Beacon Hill Historic District

to include Cambridge Street, but would consider another type of protection area regulated by design guidelines, and requiring public review.

The Beacon Hill Civic Association has indicated that they do not believe that the new amendment represents a workable approach to zoning. They are concerned that the FARs, if increased from their current 2 to 4 and 5 might result in driving land values up and creating a demand for FAR variances greater than 5. In addition, the Association finds that by maintaining an FAR of 2, virtually all new development will require variances, thus allowing for greater participation by community groups in determining both dimensional issues and architectural design detailing. The Civic Association maintains the position it presented at the hearing that the FAR on the south side of Cambridge Street should be 2 as-of-right and up to 3 with review pursuant to Article 31 of the Boston Zoning Code. In the alternative, they prefer that no Plan or new zoning be adopted and that the interim zoning be allowed to expire, in which case the zoning would revert back from the IPOD to the underlying zoning of L-2-65. However, the Civic Association has indicated a willingness to review the block by block approach to evaluate the dimensions currently recommended with a view toward an acceptable resolution.



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## IV. ACHIEVING THE PLAN





## Zoning

### **The Downtown Interim Planning Overlay District**

In 1987, the Zoning Commission approved Article 27D, an amendment to the Zoning Code, which established interim zoning controls for the downtown in order to provide the proper balance between competing land uses and economic and environmental factors which existing zoning at the time failed to insure.

The south side and the edge of the north side of Cambridge Street were included in a Priority Preservation Subdistrict in which new development could achieve a height of 65 feet and FAR 2 as-of-right,. The back half of the north side was contained in Medium Growth Subdistrict with height and FARs of 125/8 as-of-right and 155/10 if certain enhanced criteria were met.

Article 27D also established 11 Special Study Areas, of which Cambridge Street is one, for which planning and rezoning would proceed on a community based, district-by-district basis in conjunction with the Boston Civic Design Commission. This Plan fulfills the requirement of Article 27D for a district plan for Cambridge Street.

### **Cambridge Street District Zoning (proposed Article 46)**

#### Height and Density

##### South Side

On the south or Beacon Hill side of Cambridge Street, height and FAR vary along the street as discussed in the previous section. However, in general it appears that a height limited to approximately 55 feet and FAR limited to 4 or 5 may be appropriate.

##### North Side

With respect to the north side of Cambridge Street, height and FAR will be 65 feet FAR 4 except for a certain area starting at a depth of 65 feet from the street line. New development in these areas will be allowed 80 feet/FAR 6 as-of-right with a provision for a height of 100 feet/FAR 7 with Article 31 review.

Article 31 review is required in the area in which the MGH garages are located under certain as-of-right conditions. (See Article 46).

### Charles Street Jail Site

Development on the Charles Street Jail site is allowed an as-of-right height of 125 feet in the front portion of the site; in the rear of the site the maximum allowed height will be 125 feet as-of-right or 155 feet with Article 31 review. The maximum floor area ratio permitted is 5.

### Day Care

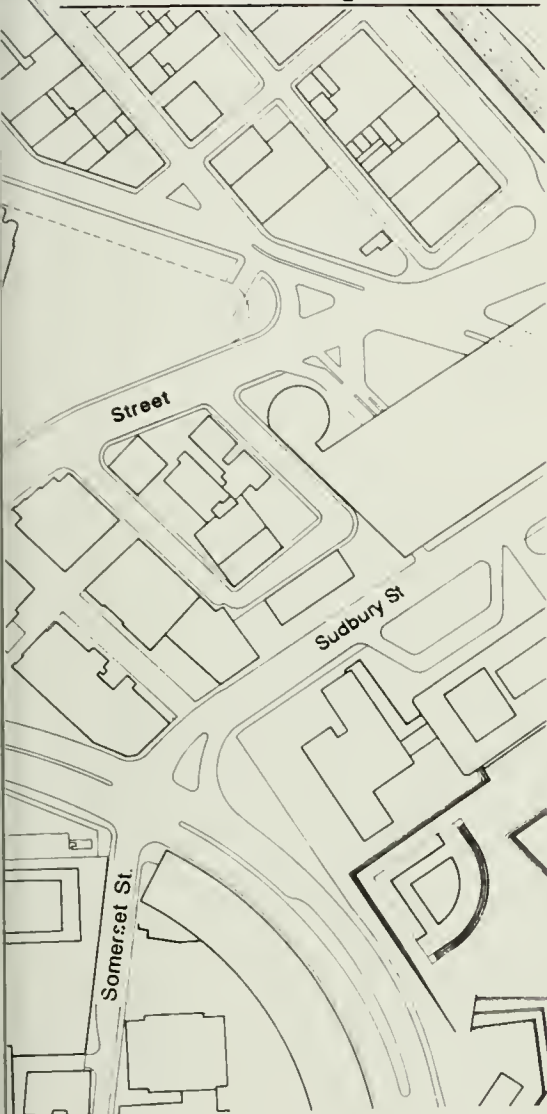
Developers of commercial office projects of over 100,000 gross square feet (GSF) must provide day care either on-site or in the vicinity of the proposed project. Up to 200,000 GSF of development will require 2% of gross floor area to be devoted to day care. Projects of 200,000 to 500,000 GSF will be required to create 4,000 GSF of day care; 500,001 to 1,000,000 GSF will be required to create 8,000 GSF and if over 1,000,000 GSF of development, 12,000 GSF of day care facilities must be established.

### **Implementation**

The Cambridge Street Plan and proposed zoning regulations will be reviewed by community groups and then will be the subject of a public hearing before the Board of the Boston Redevelopment Authority and a subsequent public comment period. If the Plan is adopted, the zoning implementing the Plan will be submitted to the Boston Zoning Commission for a public hearing. If approved by the Commission, the Zoning Code would be amended to incorporate Article 46, and the Cambridge Street Plan would become the portion of the general plan for the city governing Cambridge Street.



## Zoning



5'-55' Protection Area: FAR 3-5\*  
*o to be addressed separately*

5' Protection Area: FAR 4

0'-100' Restricted Growth Subdistrict: FAR 6-7

0'-100' Restricted Growth Subdistrict: FAR 6-7  
*o Article 31 review mandatory*

25' Protection Area: FAR 5

25'-155' Medium Growth Area: FAR 5

Open Space  
*o to be addressed separately*



New

Bowdoin St.

Temple St.

Hancock St.

Joy St.

South Russell St.

Irving St.

Garden St.

Blossom St.

Stanford Street

Street









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## APPENDIX A



## Beacon Hill Architectural Commission

The Beacon Hill Architectural Commission (BHAC) serves the residents and businesses of the Beacon Hill Historic District by enforcing the architectural design guidelines established for the area. The Commission has jurisdiction to review any exterior changes that are visible from a public way, and monitors any changes to architecture including repainting or extensive cleaning.

The BHAC reviews applications for architectural changes during scheduled public hearings on the third Thursday of each month, at which time a Certificate of Appropriateness is awarded or

denied. Without an approved Certificate, a building permit is not issued.

The Beacon Hill Historic District was formed under Chapter 616 of the Acts of 1955 (to which there have been four amendments). The District is bounded by Embankment Road, a line running parallel to and 40 feet back from Cambridge Street, Bowdoin and Beacon Streets; separate pieces within the District include the Granary Burial Ground as well as the Old West Church and the Harrison Gray Otis House located on Cambridge Street.





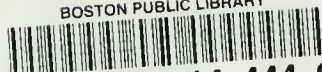








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